

The decision by Sinclair to air a harsh political film in the days before the election is unfair. As you know, the closing days of a presidential campaign are a sensitive time, when media organizations try not to do anything that would look like they are leaning toward one side or the other. Can you imagine if CBS or CNN ran Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" to whip up the audience against Bush? There would be an uproar.

By ordering its 62 stations to preempt its regular programming and air this program, Sinclair is saying the air waves do not belong to the people. If Sinclair believed in fairness in the media, it would not insist on airing such a loaded, one-sided film.

Are you aware that Sinclair's chief executive David Smith is a strong supporter of President Bush or that its executives have donated nearly \$70,000 in this campaign, 97% of it to Republicans? Sinclair is in denial about how partisan this looks. Its spokesman, Mark Hyman, believes this program is "news." It is not news; the opinions of Vietnam vets regarding the anti-war movement and John Kerry's specific opposition to that war have been well-known for decades in this country.

This piece is nothing more than an extension of the political ads run by the Swift Boat Veterans since August; it is merely a longer version. The idea that this is a news story, in the sense that the veterans who were imprisoned by the North Vietnamese have not been heard from before, is simply not true.

As Reed Hundt, former chairman of the FCC, stated this week: "Fairness is the fundamental principle of the broadcasting industry in America today. The American people own the airwaves, and they give them to broadcasters for free. They sell them to cellular companies, but they give them to broadcasters for free. And the clear expectation -- it's tradition, it's also in a lot of rules. The clear expectation is that broadcasters will present, fairly, reports about political matters."

"Fundamental fairness is something that everybody can recognize here, and it's not fundamentally fair to show a half hour of biased propaganda against one candidate. Doesn't matter who the candidate is, it's not fair. Now, when we turn to politics, there are standards there. And the fundamental standards are that broadcasters are supposed to be neutral and balanced and accurate when they're dealing with important political matters."

Please do not allow Sinclair to brazenly abuse the trust Americans have in fundamental fairness. Thank you.